

Concern for sailors' well-being up amid suicides

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's top enlisted sailor told the crew of an aircraft carrier that has seen three suicides in the past two weeks to temper expectations of their environment during their prolonged maintenance stay at a Virginia shipyard.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith made the comment Friday in response to a sailor serving aboard the USS George Washington. A transcript of the conversation was released later by the Navy.

"What you're not doing is sleeping in a foxhole like a Marine might be doing. What you are doing is going home at night most nights," he said. "So when you're here, some of it is that you have some more stability in that you're here. The downside is some of the s--- that you have to go through logistically will drive

you crazy."

Some sailors have said conditions on the ship may be contributing to mental health issues among crew members, according to the transcript.

"Those things include the allocation of our basic allowance for subsistence to ship meals, parking issues, cold water, hot water," said the sailor, whose name was redacted. "Living standards that aren't necessarily up to par."

Smith took issue with the "not up to par" characterization, but said he understands crew members' frustration. He added that the sailors should feel able to voice their concerns but "do so with reasonable expectations" and realization of what a refueling and complex overhaul, or RCOH, is like.

It means shutting down water and "some of the other hotel services," and moving around peo-

ple who live aboard the ship in order to meet legal and safety requirements, Smith said.

The George Washington is nearing the end of a multiyear RCOH at a shipyard in Newport News. The process usually occurs at the midpoint in a carrier's lifespan, replenishing its nuclear fuels and updating systems.

The ship began the typically four-year process in 2017, but the coronavirus pandemic and other setbacks caused delays.

Smith's visit came amid concerns about the well-being of the crew in the aftermath of the suicides of three shipmates. Another sailor death in December 2021 also is being attributed to suicide.

In all, seven sailors assigned to the ship have died in the last year, CNN reported. The Navy is investigating the deaths as well as the command climate and

culture of the ship.

It has said that chaplains, psychologists, counselors and leadership are engaged with crew members and available to them.

In answering questions about the availability of mental health professionals, Smith acknowledged shortcomings. He cited his own experience paying out of pocket for counseling because of a six-week wait for an appointment.

The Navy recently hired 133 mental health workers, has staffed chaplains on destroyers and was evaluating other ways to meet sailors' needs, he said. More work needs to be done, but "we are also each other's counselors," he said.

Smith said in a statement, also released Monday, that he takes his responsibility to advocate for personnel seriously and visited the ship to learn about the difficulties sailors are facing.

UN nuclear chief wants access to plant in Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — The International Atomic Energy Agency's director-general said the level of safety at Europe's largest nuclear plant, currently under Russian occupation in Ukraine, is like a "red light blinking" as his organization tries in vain to get access for work including repairs.

Rafael Grossi, in an interview with The Associated Press, turned the focus to the nuclear plant at Zaporizhzhia — a day after the 36th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. That plant was also taken over by Russian forces.

Grossi said the IAEA needs access to the Zaporizhzhia plant in southern Ukraine so its inspectors can, among other things, reestablish connections with the Vienna-based headquarters of the U.N. agency. And for that, both Russia and Ukraine need to help.

The plant requires repairs, "and all of this is not happening. So the situation as I have described it, and I would repeat it today, is not sustainable as it is," Grossi said. "So this is a pending issue. This is a red light blinking."

He spoke in an interview Wednesday, a day after meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about the issue.

"Understandably, my Ukrainian counterparts do not want the IAEA inspectors to go to one of their own facilities under the authority of a third power," Grossi said. "I had a long conversation about this with President Zelenskyy last night, and it's something that will still require consultations. We are not there yet."

The IAEA chief has continued to press Russia's government for access to the Zaporizhzhia plant.

"I don't see movement in that direction as we speak," he said. But he is meeting with the Russian side "soon."

With 15 reactors and one of the largest nuclear power capacities in the world, the war has essentially turned parts of Ukraine into a nuclear minefield. Again and again since the invasion, nuclear experts have watched in alarm as Russian forces have come uncomfortably close to multiple nuclear plants in Ukraine.

A Chernobyl security worker told the AP that the Russians flew aircraft over the damaged reactor site and dug trenches in highly radioactive dirt. On Monday, Russian cruise missiles flew over the Khmelnytsky nuclear plant in western Ukraine.

"There cannot be any military action in or around a nuclear power plant," Grossi said, adding that he has appealed to Russia about this.

Russia releases US vet in prisoner swap

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Russia and the United States have carried out an unexpected prisoner exchange in a time of high tensions, trading a Marine veteran jailed by Moscow for a convicted Russian drug trafficker serving a long prison sentence in America.

The deal announced by both countries involving Trevor Reed, 30, an American imprisoned for nearly three years, would have been a notable diplomatic maneuver even in times of peace. It was all the more surprising because it was done as Russia's war with Ukraine has driven relations with the U.S. to their lowest point in decades.

The U.S., for its part, returned Konstantin Yaroshenko, a Russian pilot who'd been serving a 20-year federal prison sentence in Connecticut for conspiracy to smuggle cocaine into the U.S. af-

ter he was arrested in Liberia in 2010 and extradited to the U.S. The Justice Department has described him as "an experienced international drug trafficker" who conspired to distribute thousands of kilograms of cocaine around the world.

Despite Reed's release, other Americans remain jailed in Russia, including WNBA star Brittney Griner and Michigan corporate security executive Paul Whelan.

The exchange took place in Turkey, Reed's father, Joey Reed, told CNN.

"The American plane pulled up next to the Russian plane and they walked both prisoners across at the same time, like you see in the movies," he said.

The swap seemed unlikely to herald any larger breakthrough between Washington and Moscow. A senior Biden administra-

tion official cautioned that the negotiations centered on a "discrete set of prisoner issues" and did not represent a change to the government's condemnation of Russia's violence against Ukraine.

"Where we can have discussions on issues of mutual interest we will try to talk to the Russians and have a constructive conversation without any way changing our approach to the appalling violence in Ukraine," the official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the administration.

President Joe Biden, who met in Washington with Reed's parents last month, trumpeted Reed's release and noted without elaboration that "the negotiations that allowed us to bring Trevor home required difficult decisions that I do not take lightly." The Russian foreign ministry described the exchange as the "re-

sult of a long negotiation process."

Reed, a former Marine from Texas, was arrested in the summer of 2019 after Russian authorities said he assaulted an officer while being driven by police to a police station following a night of heavy drinking. He was later sentenced to nine years in prison, though his family maintained his innocence and the U.S. government described him as unjustly detained and expressed concern about his declining health.

A senior U.S. official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity, described Reed's case as one of "utmost priority" for the Biden administration. His family said Reed's poor health included symptoms of tuberculosis.

"It was a difficult decision but one that we thought was worth it," the official said.

China protests 'routine' Navy transit through Taiwan Strait

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy sent another guided-missile destroyer through the Taiwan Strait on Tuesday, the fourth U.S. warship to make the trip this year.

The USS Sampson continued a 2-year-old Navy routine of sending a ship through the contentious, 110-mile-wide strait roughly once a month. It steamed northeast through the strait as part of a "routine transit," 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Nicholas Lingo told Stars and Stripes in an email Wednesday.

The strait separates mainland China from the island of Taiwan and offers a maritime route between the South China Sea and East China Sea.

"U.S. Navy ships routinely use the Taiwan Strait to transit between the two and have done so

for many years," Lingo said. The Sampson's passage was not in response to any particular event or action.

China regards Taiwan as a breakaway province that must be reunited with the mainland, by force if necessary. Taiwan, a functioning democracy, is a friend to the United States, which does not recognize the island as independent but supports it with arms sales, public statements, visits from high-ranking political figures and other measures.

Lingo's email said the Chinese military hailed the Sampson, but the communications were "consistent with international norms" and did not affect the ship's movement. A spokesman for the Chinese army's Eastern Theater Command, Senior Colonel Shi Yi, condemned the Sampson's passage as provocative.

Navy awards \$72M to Boeing for unmanned sub prototype

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy has awarded \$72.5 million to Boeing to deliver a prototype of a very large, unmanned submarine for testing purposes, ahead of five of the same model already in production.

Boeing has been under contract to build the Orca Extra Large Unmanned Undersea Vehicles, or XLUUVs, since it won the contract over Lockheed Martin in February 2019.

The Orca could carry a variety of payloads, but it may first "covertly deploy" the Hammerhead mine, a weapon tethered to the seabed and armed with an anti-submarine torpedo, according to a March 31 report from the Congressional Research Service.

The March 25 contract modification allows for a "test asset sys-

tem" for the Navy to evaluate the Orca platform before receiving the completed submarines, Naval Systems Command spokesperson Jamie Koehler told Stars and Stripes in a Friday email.

"The Navy and Boeing plan to use this Test Asset System for a test/fix/test platform while the five vehicles continue production, which will reduce schedule and cost risk," Koehler said. "This approach provides an important learning period for XLUUVs and will help ensure the success of the overall XLUUV acquisition strategy."

The Navy expects to begin testing the prototype in water this month, Koehler said.

Since awarding the original \$43 million contract to Boeing in 2019, the Orca development contract has grown to \$357 million, according to usaspending.gov.

Docked pay, reprimand in 1st USAF general trial

Associated Press

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — An Air Force major general in Ohio who was convicted on one of three specifications of an abusive sexual contact charge was told Tuesday that he would receive a reprimand and must forfeit \$10,910 of monthly pay for five months.

Maj. Gen. William Cooley, 56, was found guilty Saturday in what was the first-ever military trial of an Air Force general.

The weeklong court-martial at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio had three specifications, one accusing Cooley of a forcible kiss and two alleging forcible touching in 2018. Cooley was convicted of the forcible kissing specification but acquitted of the other two.

Cooley had the option of a trial by court member jurors or by military judge, and chose to have the case heard by the judge. He had faced a maximum punishment of dismissal, forfei-

ture of all pay and allowances and confinement for seven years.

Speaking after the sentencing hearing, Cooley's civilian attorney, Dan Conway, told The Dayton Daily News that his client is "very thankful for the judge's compassion here." Conway said the punishment was "a very significant sentence," and he said a letter of reprimand may have implications in terms of the rank at which Cooley will be allowed to retire, if he chooses to

do so.

Officials said the verdict marked the first court-martial trial and conviction of a general officer in the Air Force's 75-year history.

"If this result influenced just one survivor to know that his or her attacker's rank or status would not prevent them from being held accountable, that is a win for the United States and the military justice system," Lt. Col. Matthew Neil, who served as lead prosecutor, said Tuesday.

S. Koreans charged in alleged hiring scheme

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — More than two dozen South Koreans, including several employed by the U.S. military, were indicted on charges of employment fraud following a two-year investigation, South Korean police said Monday.

Twenty-six people, including 10 current and former U.S. Forces Korea employees, pocketed roughly \$138,700 in exchange for preferential treatment of Korean job candidates between April 2018 and December 2020, the Daegu Metropolitan Police statement said.

Two defendants, including an official with the USFK Labor Service Corps, were arrested according to police. The labor official and others are suspected of receiving between \$23,800 and \$31,700 from five job seekers in exchange for favorable reviews during their interviews.

The defendants allegedly created fake certifications required for employment. Police confiscated around \$126,800 from the defendants prior to their arrest.

The investigation was launched after the Army's

Criminal Investigation Division obtained information about the bribes and relayed it to South Korean authorities. An Eighth Army spokesman declined to comment on whether the suspects were privy to sensitive military information.

"These arrests involved persons and activities that may be related to the Korean Service Corps and are currently the subject of a criminal investigation," Army Lt. Col. Neil Penttila said in a statement Tuesday. "We will withhold further comment until the completion of that investigation."

The Daegu Metropolitan Police and its International Crime Investigation Team vowed to work jointly with Army investigators to "actively respond to illegal acts being committed by USFK-affiliated South Koreans."

Corruption that undermines impartial hiring is a crime punishable not only when money or other considerations changes hands, but also when they're offered as a bribe, the Daegu Metropolitan Police statement said. "Thus, we ask people to report to police whenever they receive such a suggestion or witness anything of the kind."

Company reps confronted on military housing issues

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Two service members told senators about their families' experience with mold in a home rented from Balfour Beatty at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. Their experiences were documented in a report compiled and released Tuesday by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which is part of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

The hearing was designed to hear their stories and question leaders from the company about the findings of the report titled "Mistreatment of Military Families in Privatized Housing."

Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga., who is the chairman of the subcommittee, initiated the eight-month investigation that led to the report after visiting Fort Gordon in his home state and hearing from military families about their troubles with Balfour Beatty.

"I heard stories about maintenance requests that were ignored. Maintenance requests that were never followed up on, and not just routine maintenance, but maintenance that impacted the health and safety of our service members and their families living in their homes,"

Ossoff said. "The results of this investigation are alarming and disturbing."

Richard Taylor, president of facility operations, renovation and construction for Balfour Beatty, told the subcommittee that the service members' testimonies were "their perception."

By December, Balfour Beatty pleaded guilty to defrauding the military in a scheme to alter maintenance records that were tied to financial bonuses.

The company paid \$65 million in restitution and fines. Balfour Beatty has continued to provide housing to the military at 55 bases in the U.S.

The subcommittee's investigation focused on issues from 2019 to the present, while the Justice Department focused its charges on housing issues from 2013 and 2019.

"Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me," said Sen. Ron Johnson, of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican of the subcommittee. "How can we get this under control? This seems to be a problem that has just plagued military housing. The military doesn't want to deal with housing, so they contracted outside. Then you don't sit at the controls, so the contractors do the type of job that we all expect."

Merrill's Marauders veteran dies at 99

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Raleigh Naves, 99, died Thursday in Chippewa Falls, Wis., just one day after the Army veteran had received the Congressional Gold Medal for his role in fighting with the famed Merrill's Marauders in Burma during World War II.

"It was almost as if the Congressional Gold Medal award ceremony was his final goal," Jim Naves, his eldest son, said Monday in a news release by Jonnie Melillo Clasen, who in recent years has served as an informal liaison for the aging group of Marauders.

With the death of Naves, only four original members of Merrill's Marauders are living, said Clasen, whose late father was a member of the unit.

The Marauders' namesake was Brig.

Gen. Frank Merrill, who led the Army unit as it fought behind Japanese lines in Burma, now known as Myanmar, during the war. The Army Rangers trace their lineage to the Marauders.

The unit's ultimate mission was to capture the Myitkyina airfield in northern Burma, which it did on May 17, 1944, but not before a 1,000-mile slog over the Himalayan foothills, through jungles and enemy resistance.

Last fall, Congress approved the Congressional Gold Medal for all the soldiers of the 5307th Composite Unit, as the Marauders were formally known, "in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service in the jungles of Burma during World War II." Naves was presented the Gold Medal on Wednesday by 1st Sgt. Daniel Ryan, a Ranger from Camp Frank D. Merrill in Dahlo-

nga, Ga., while surrounded by family and friends at the Chippewa Manor nursing home, where he had been living for the past few years, Clasen said.

"That night he passed in his sleep, and we believe it is because he felt his mission here on earth was finished," the veteran's family said in his obituary.

"Raleigh was a man of few words with a huge heart, and he will be missed by all who knew him," the obituary said.

Naves was born Sept. 8, 1922, in Cadott, Wis., and raised on a dairy farm with seven brothers and one sister. He and his wife, Betty, were married for 74 years before her death last year.

Naves will be buried Friday at Prairie View Cemetery in Chippewa Falls with military honors provided by the Army Rangers and the Chippewa Falls Patriot Council.

Senators raise concerns over weapon replenishment

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The prospect of arming Ukraine for a protracted war with Russia raised concerns among some senators on Tuesday that repeated raiding of U.S. weapon stockpiles and slow replenishment could leave the American military empty-handed.

Shipments to Ukraine of weapons such as Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles have cut into the Pentagon's inventory by about one-third, according to estimates by some lawmakers and experts during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

Restocking them will likely take several years, they said.

"I think we have lost the luxury of time

here, the closet is bare," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. "The decisions we make now will determine the outcome [of the war] because these weapons will not magically appear for us or our allies or Ukraine."

Blumenthal has been a vocal supporter of invoking the Defense Production Act to fund and sustain a higher rate of munition production. He noted it would take a year to boost production of Javelins and 32 months to restock them unless President Joe Biden invokes the act. The weapon has proved crucial for the Ukrainians in repelling Russian forces.

"The challenge is extraordinary and requires this kind of commitment," Blumenthal said.

David Berteau, the leader of the trade association Professional Services Council, told senators that he has not seen a single contract in place to start replenishments. The council represents service contractors that work with the government.

If the United States keeps pulling weapons from inventories at its current rate, stocks could be depleted within six months, he said. The White House authorized two \$800 million military aid packages to Ukraine in recent weeks, though the last package does not include Javelins and Stingers.

"There is no way contractors are going to deliver replacements in less than [six months] even if we started today," Berteau told senators. "We're behind and you guys should push them to hurry up."

DOD gives Hawaii \$96M for a new elementary school

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Defense Department on Monday announced a \$96 million award to Hawaii for construction of a new elementary school at Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Oahu.

The new school will replace the dilapidated Mokapu Elementary School, which had earned a "poor" rating for its condition on the DOD's most recent "Public Schools on Military Installations Priority List."

All Hawaii public schools, including those on military bases, are administered by the state Department of Education.

Mokapu Elementary is made up of 12 permanent buildings constructed about 70 years ago and 10 portable structures that have been added for classroom space as the student body has grown through the years, the Marine Corps said in a news release Tuesday.

The complex sits on about 14 acres, with 813 students enrolled this school year,

which concludes at the end of May.

The DOD priority list states that the existing school should have an enrollment no larger than 627 students.

"This new facility will serve 975 military-connected students in grades kindergarten through sixth," the Marine Corps said.

The new school is estimated to cost \$120 million, with the state of Hawaii kicking in the other \$24 million, the Hawaii Department of Education said in a statement emailed Tuesday to Stars and Stripes.

60% in US have been infected with COVID-19

The Washington Post

Before omicron, one-third of Americans had been infected with the coronavirus, but by the end of February, that rate had climbed to nearly 60%, including 3 out of 4 children, according to federal health data released Tuesday.

The data from blood tests offers the first evidence that over half the U.S. population, roughly 190 million people, have been infected at least once since the pandemic began. That is more than double the official case count. Many of those infections are likely to have been asymptomatic or with few symptoms. The virus has killed nearly 1 million Americans and caused disruptions that have driven up death rates from other causes, including cancer and

heart disease.

Officials cautioned, however, that the data, drawn from tens of thousands of blood samples from across the country, does not indicate people have protection against the virus going forward, especially against increasingly transmissible variants that may be able to evade antibodies. Previous infections are believed to offer some protection against severe disease for most people, especially when combined with vaccinations. But the natural waning of antibodies and an ever-evolving virus create opportunities for reinfection.

“We continue to recommend that everyone be up to date on their vaccinations, get your primary series and booster, when eligible,” CDC Director Rochelle

Walensky said during a media briefing.

“We don’t know how long [ago] that infection was,” she said of antibodies from past infections. “We don’t know whether that protection has waned. We don’t know as much about that level of protection than we do about the protection we get from both vaccines and boosters.”

The CDC report is the first official confirmation of what experts suspected: Most people in the country have had at least one coronavirus infection. Close to half of those got that infection in recent months when the omicron variant swept the nation. That variant had so many mutations it could easily infect people who had antibodies from previous bouts of the virus or whose antibodies were gener-

ated by vaccine.

The CDC study was able to distinguish naturally induced antibodies from those generated from vaccines. That allowed researchers to estimate actual infections, separate from the effect from vaccinations. The largest increases were in children and teenagers through age 17 — about 75% of them had been infected by February, based on blood samples that look at antibodies developed in response to a coronavirus infection but not in response to vaccination. That’s about 58 million children.

The data suggests 189 million Americans had the coronavirus by end of February, well over double the 80 million cases shown by The Washington Post’s case tracker, which is based on state data of confirmed infections.

SpaceX launches astronauts for NASA after private flight

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX launched four astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA on Wednesday, less than two days after completing a flight chartered by millionaires.

It’s the first NASA crew comprised equally of men and women, including the first Black woman making a long-term spaceflight, Jessica Watkins.

“This is one of the most diversified, I think, crews that we’ve had in a really, really long time,” said NASA’s space operations mission chief, Kathy Lueders.

The astronauts were due to arrive at the space station Wednesday night, 16 hours after a pre-dawn liftoff from Kennedy Space Center that thrilled spec-

tators. After an express flight comparable to traveling from New York to Singapore, the crew will move in for a five-month stay.

SpaceX has now launched five crews for NASA and two private trips in just under two years. Elon Musk’s company is having an especially busy few weeks: It just finished taking three businessmen to and from the space station as NASA’s first private guests.

The just-completed private flight was NASA’s first dip into space tourism after years of opposition. The space agency said the three people who paid \$55 million each to visit the space station blended in while doing experiments and educational outreach.

Minneapolis police probe finds racial discrimination

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minneapolis’ police department has engaged in a pattern of race discrimination for at least the past decade, including stopping and arresting Blacks at a higher rate than whites, using force more often on people of color and maintaining a culture where racist language is tolerated, a state investigation launched after George Floyd’s killing in 2020 found.

The report released Wednesday by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights following a nearly two-year investigation said the agency and the city would negotiate a consent decree to address the problem, with input from residents, officers, city staff and others.

The report said police department data “demonstrates significant racial disparities with respect to officers’ use of force, traffic stops, searches, citations and arrests.” And it said officers “used covert social media to surveil Black individuals and Black organizations, unrelated to criminal activity, and maintain an organizational culture where some officers and supervisors use racist, misogynistic and disrespectful language with impunity.”

Human Rights Commissioner Rebecca Lucero said during a news conference after the report was released that it doesn’t single out any officers or city leaders.

Asked how long the consent decree might take, Lucero said, “As long as it takes to do it right.”



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Oladipo leads Heat into second round

Associated Press

MIAMI — It was about a year ago. Victor Oladipo was sitting alone in a dark room. The realization that he needed a second surgery on his right leg was settling in. Frustration, fear, sadness and anger just came pouring out of him.

He broke down.

“I was at the lowest point I could be at,” Oladipo said.

That moment is clearly not forgotten: Oladipo gave his recollections of what went on in that room Tuesday night, to illustrate both where he was and where he is. He scored a team-high 23 points in Miami’s series-clinching 97-94 win over the Atlanta Hawks, a victory that sent the Heat to the second round of the playoffs.

It was only the 10th game this season for Oladipo, including the regular season. But with Jimmy Butler and Kyle Lowry sidelined, the Heat needed someone to step up in Game 5. Many did, including Oladipo, who needed two surgeries to fix a right quadriceps tendon, spent

basically a year rehabbing after each of those procedures, and has been limited to 66 games in the last three seasons combined.

“I can’t really explain why I’m going through what I went through,” Oladipo said. “I can’t really explain why I’m here today. But I’m staying in the moment and making every moment mean something. Just going out there and playing hard, man. We had a great win. A great series. But the job isn’t done yet. There is still a lot more basketball left. We’ve just got to keep getting better. That’s what I’m focused on doing.”

It’s the 12th time that the top-seeded Heat have moved into the conference semifinals; Game 1 against either fourth-seeded Philadelphia or fifth-seeded Toronto will be in Miami on Monday.

For Oladipo, it’ll be a first. He’s appeared in 18 playoff games in his career, all of them of the first-round variety.

“I really admire him. I do, for this journey for the last three

seasons where he’s been dealing with injuries and frustration, and then really working to make himself available for us without a guarantee to play,” Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. “He’s just giving to the team. That’s why everybody roots for him. He always comes in with a smile on his face and lifts people up.”

After nearly a full year of rehab from surgery No. 2, Oladipo made his season debut on March 7. That was the first of six appearances he made over the next four weeks, averaging 6.3 points. He was in and out of the rotation, a frustrating thing for a former All-NBA player. Miami already was pretty set in its ways on who was playing where and when.

Oladipo wasn’t given a job. He had to wait for his moment.

He scored 21 points in a win at Toronto on April 3. He scored 40 in his next outing, the regular-season finale against Orlando on April 10. He made his post-season debut this year for the Heat in Game 4 against the

Hawks, going plus-28 in his 23 minutes and sparking a huge turnaround. Then came Tuesday, when Oladipo hit his first four shots to spark the crowd and start the momentum toward a series-clincher.

“He’s been through a lot,” Miami center Bam Adebayo said. “Behind the scenes, y’all don’t get to see him, but he’s working out every day, two to three times a day. We always tell him, ‘stay ready so you ain’t gotta get ready.’ ... The fact that he was ready, and he performed, that reminded me of the Indiana Victor a little bit.”

And Indiana Victor was pretty good.

He was a two-time All-Star with the Pacers, before getting hurt in January 2019. He returned a year later, good but clearly not the same, and Indiana traded him to Houston in January 2021. The Rockets didn’t keep him long before moving him to Miami, with whom Oladipo played four games in March 2021 before getting hurt again.

Morant’s last-second layup lifts Grizzlies over Wolves

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The Memphis Grizzlies keep proving that no deficit is too deep to claw their way back to victory.

And Ja Morant is getting tired of playing from behind against the Minnesota Timberwolves, no matter how good the wins feel. He wants to see the Grizzlies start like they did in their easiest win of this series in Game 2.

“Not give them too much life,” Morant said. “Go ahead and come out and play hard. Play with energy. Start early. Last three games, we haven’t played our basketball. Weren’t knocking down shots, but we battled. Me personally, I’m giving it my all. Ready to lay down.”

The NBA’s Most Improved Player scored 18 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter, including the final 13 for Memphis, in rallying the Grizzlies from a 13-point deficit with 9:38 left. Morant’s final bucket, a layup with a second left, lifted Memphis to a 111-109 victory over Minnesota and a 3-2 lead in their first-round Western Conference series.

This deficit was half the 26-point shortfall the Grizzlies clawed their way back from, not counting the 25-point deficit late in the third, in winning Game 3. That tied the Memphis’ franchise record for the biggest comeback victory.

According to ESPN, that makes the Grizzlies the first

NBA team ever to post multiple comeback wins after trailing by double digits going into the fourth quarter in a single playoff series. The Miami Heat in 2020 were the only other team that managed to rally from double-digit deficits in the fourth quarter twice in a single post-season.

Bane says there’s no quit in the team.

“We’re at our home arena down, down late,” Bane said. “Their players talking about ‘Oh, they’re about to fold, about to fold.’ I knew that wasn’t the case, and we just kept chipping away, kept trusting and what we do got some stops and was able to make some shots down the stretch.”

Minnesota led 99-88 only to be outscored 23-10 over the final 6:43, and Memphis outscored the Timberwolves 34-27 in the final quarter. The Grizzlies also outrebounded the Wolves 18-10 in the fourth, and 10 offensive rebounds led to a 12-0 edge in second-chance points.

The biggest was Brandon Clarke tipping a missed three from Tyus Jones out where Morant snagged it before knocking down his lone three of the game. That gave Memphis its first lead since the first quarter.

The Wolves missed 4 of 14 at one stretch in the fourth, part of an ugly shooting night where Memphis clanked dunks and missed wide-open three-pointers.

Blue Jays stun Red Sox in 10th inning

Associated Press

TORONTO — George Springer hit a two-run homer to force extra innings, Raimel Taipa hit a game-ending sacrifice fly in the 10th and the Toronto Blue Jays defeated the slumping Boston Red Sox a 6-5 in 10 innings. It was the fourth straight loss for the Red Sox.

Tapia hit a fly ball to left on the ninth pitch of his at-bat against Matt Barnes (0-1), scoring automatic runner Bo Bichette.

Springer tied it with two outs in the ninth with his homer off Jake Diekman.

Blue Jays closer Jordan Romano (1-1) escaped a jam in the top of the 10th.

Brewers 12, Pirates 8: Willy Adames homered twice and drove in a career-high seven runs, and Milwaukee won at Pittsburgh.

Adames hit a two-run blast in the first inning and a three-run drive during a six-run sixth for the NL Central-leading Brewers. It was the first multi-homer game of his career. He added a two-run double in the fifth and finished 4-for-5, raising his batting average 45 points to .239.

Yankees 12, Orioles 8: Anthony Rizzo homered three times to take over the major league lead, Aaron Judge connected on his birthday and Joey Gallo ended the longest home run drought of his career as host New York outslugged Baltimore.

Luis Severino (2-0) took a no-hitter into the sixth inning for the Yankees before Jorge Mateo's one-out single. Anthony San-

tander followed a few batters later with a three-run homer.

Twins 5, Tigers 4: Detroit catcher Eric Haase made a throwing error on a botched rundown, capping a chaotic play that gave host Minnesota two runs and a wild victory.

Miguel Sanó had the final hit for the Twins — and his ill-advised baserunning after a long single off Tigers closer Gregory Soto (1-1) wound up helping them win their fifth in a row.

Angels 4, Guardians 1: Mike Trout homered and drove in three runs, and Patrick Sandoval pitched seven innings of two-hit ball as surging Los Angeles beat visiting Cleveland for its third straight win.

Trout drove a slider from Triston McKenzie (0-2) into the bullpen in left field for a two-run shot in the third inning to give the Angels a 3-0 lead.

Padres 9, Reds 6: Eric Hosmer hit his first homer of the season and Jake Cronenworth added a bases-loaded triple during an eight-run fourth inning that sent San Diego to a win at struggling Cincinnati.

The Reds, who snapped an 11-game losing streak on Sunday, own baseball's worst record at 3-14.

Mets 3, Cardinals 0: Chris Bassitt pitched six strong innings, and New York won at St. Louis for its franchise-best sixth straight series win to start a season.

Braves 3, Cubs 1: Travis Demeritte hit his first big league homer in nearly three

years and made an impressive catch to back another strong outing by Max Fried, giving host Atlanta a much-needed win over Chicago.

Giants 8, Athletics 2: Carlos Rodón had nine strikeouts in six sharp innings and host San Francisco beat Oakland.

Royals 6, White Sox 0: Daniel Lynch pitched six crisp innings and visiting Kansas City handed Chicago its eighth straight loss.

Diamondbacks 5, Dodgers 3: David Peralta hit a tiebreaking home run in the eighth inning and also started one of Arizona's five double plays in a win over visiting Los Angeles.

Astros 5, Rangers 1: Jake Odorizzi allowed one hit over six innings to end a long winless drought, and a rejuvenated Kyle Tucker homered and drove in three runs to power Houston to a win at Texas.

Mariners 8, Rays 4: Logan Gilbert pitched 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ shutout innings, Adam Frazier hit a three-run double and Seattle won at Tampa Bay.

Phillies 10, Rockies 3: Odubel Herrera homered, doubled and drove in three runs, Zach Eflin pitched six strong innings and host Philadelphia again took advantage of some shaky Colorado defense.

Marlins 5, Nationals 2: Outfielders Jesús Sánchez and Avisail García each threw out a runner at the plate in the fourth inning, Joey Wendle hit his first homer and Miami won at reeling Washington.

Bridges, Paul pace Suns past Pelicans, take 3-2 lead

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Mikal Bridges was playing his 47th minute of basketball on Tuesday night when he leaped into the air, threw down a huge two-handed jam and pulled himself up on the rim with a little sneer for good measure.

He's the do-everything man for these Phoenix Suns. And, no, he's not even close to tired.

Bridges scored 31 points and blocked four shots in arguably the best game of his pro career, leading the Suns over the New Orleans Pelicans 112-97 to take a 3-2 lead in the Western Conference first-round series.

"I'm ready to play tomorrow,"

Bridges said with a big grin at the postgame news conference. "I'm energized, my teammates keep me going. I'm itching my knee right now, talking about it. I'm ready, I love being out there with my teammates. They're my best friends. It makes it way easier."

Chris Paul added 22 points and 11 assists, bouncing back from a subpar performance in Game 4. Deandre Ayton added 19 points and nine rebounds.

Phoenix never trailed but also never pulled away until the final few minutes against the feisty Pelicans. Once again, the Suns found a way to close, improving to 50-0 this season when leading

after three quarters, including 3-0 in this series.

Brandon Ingram scored 22 points and CJ McCollum added 21 for New Orleans, which was hurt by a slow start and 15 turnovers.

"I just thought that we made some timely mistakes, starting with the turnovers," Pelicans coach Willie Green said. "Fifteen turnovers for 23 points, that fuels their team and that fuels their transition opportunities."

The Suns took an 89-78 lead into the final quarter after Cameron Payne's late three-pointer. New Orleans — just 36-46 during the regular season — pulled within seven points with

less than two minutes left, but Cameron Johnson threw down a one-handed jam on the ensuing fast break to keep the Suns in control.

Phoenix will try to clinch the series in Game 6 on Thursday on the road. If the first five games are any indication, it will not be easy.

It was a tenacious performance for Bridges, who played 47 of a possible 48 minutes yet never looked tired. He made 12 of 17 shots from the field, blocked four shots, grabbed five rebounds and had two steals.

The lanky 25-year-old has never missed a game in his four-year NBA career.

Canes top Rangers, clinch division crown

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Vincent Trocheck had a goal and an assist, rookie Pyotr Kochetkov stopped 31 shots and the Carolina Hurricanes beat the New York Rangers 4-3 Tuesday night to win their fifth straight and clinch the Metropolitan Division title.

Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen and Jordan Martinook also scored for Carolina, and Brady Skjei had two assists. The Hurricanes, who won their second straight division title after winning the realigned Central Division in last year's shortened season, set franchise records with 53 wins and 114 points, topping marks set in 2005-06.

Bruins 4, Panthers 2: Jake DeBrusk snapped a 2-2 tie in the second period, Linus Ullmark made 19 saves and host Boston beat Florida to clinch the first wild card in the Eastern Conference.

DeBrusk scored the eventual game-winner when he slammed home the rebound of a Brad Marchand shot at 4:59. Ullmark is 5-1 in his last eight appearances and has only allowed 10 goals in that span.

Flames 5, Predators 4 (OT): Matthew Tkachuk forced overtime by scoring with a second left in the third and Elias Lindholm's OT goal secured Calgary's win at Nashville.

Despite losing their third straight, the Predators clinched a wild-card spot, thanks to Dallas' shootout win over Vegas.

Maple Leafs 3, Red Wings 0: Auston Matthews scored his NHL-leading 59th and 60th goals of the season, and host Toronto beat Detroit to clinch home-ice advantage in the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

The 24-year-old Matthews, who snapped a five-game goal drought, is the first player to score 60 times in a campaign since Steven Stamkos in 2011-12.

Avalanche 5, Blues 3: Valeri Nichushkin scored one of host Colorado's three goals in the second period and the team held on late to match the franchise record for points in a season with a win over St. Louis.

Erik Johnson and Josh Manson also scored in the second. Artturi Lehkonen added a goal just 9 seconds into the third period to make it 4-1. The Blues rallied in the closing minutes, but Nazem Kadri ended the threat by scoring an empty-net goal with 46.2 seconds left.

Canucks 5, Kraken 2: Quinn Hughes had a goal and two assists to set a franchise record for points by a Vancouver defenseman in a win over visiting Seattle.

Despite the victory, the Canucks were eliminated from

playoff contention.

Oilers 5, Penguins 1: Connor McDavid had a goal and three assists to outduel Sidney Crosby, and surging Edmonton rolled to a win at Pittsburgh.

McDavid pushed his point total to an NHL-best 122 by finishing off his 22nd career four-point game with a pretty shot from a tight angle 9:13 into the third period. His 44th goal gave the Oilers a three-goal lead.

Stars 3, Golden Knights 2 (SO): Miro Heiskanen made the only shot in a seven-round shootout and host Dallas moved closer to clinching a playoff spot with a victory over Vegas, which is still hanging on to slim playoff hopes.

Jason Robertson reached the 40-goal mark by scoring twice for the Stars.

Islanders 4, Capitals 1: Playing without injured captain Alex Ovechkin, host Washington missed an opportunity to move up in the standings with a loss to New York.

The Capitals blew a lead and gave up four unanswered goals to an opponent that has long been out of playoff contention.

Coyotes 5, Wild 3: Travis Boyd scored the go-ahead goal, which stood after a long review, and last-place Arizona slowed host Minnesota's pursuit of home-ice advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

The loss snapped a 10-game winning streak for Minnesota, which is in a battle for home ice with the St. Louis Blues, its first-round opponent. The two entered Tuesday tied with 109 points, though the Wild have a game in hand.

Lightning 4, Blue Jackets 1: Steven Stamkos reached the 100-point mark for the first time in his NHL career by scoring two goals and assisting on two more, and host Tampa Bay beat Columbus.

Stamkos has at least three points in each of his past five games and is the eighth NHL player to reach 100 points this season.

Senators 5, Devils 4: Drake Batherson scored in overtime to give host Ottawa a win over New Jersey.

Batherson also scored in regulation, Tim Stutzle had a pair of goals and Thomas Chabot also scored for the Senators in this matchup of teams near the bottom of the Eastern Conference.

Ducks 5, Sharks 2: Max Comtois and Sonny Milano scored in a span of less than a minute in the second period and Anaheim won at San Jose. Neither team is playoff-bound.

Trevor Zegras and Josh Mahura also scored and Zach Aston-Reese had an empty-netter for the Ducks, who had lost six of their past seven games.

Emmert stepping down as NCAA president after 12 years

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — NCAA President Mark Emmert is stepping down after 12 tumultuous years leading an association that has become increasingly marginalized while college sports has undergone massive changes and been besieged by political and legal attacks.

NCAA Board of Governors Chairman John DeGioia announced the move Tuesday and said it was by mutual agreement. The 69-year-old Emmert will continue to serve in his role until a new president is in place or until June 30, 2023.

The move is not entirely a surprise. The

NCAA remains the biggest governing body in college athletics, but it has been under sharp criticism for years as too heavy handed and even out of date with Emmert serving as the prime target.

Emmert has guided the NCAA through the most transformative period in the history of the more than 100-year-old organization. During the past decade, athletes have gained more power, benefits and ability to earn money than ever before. Amateurism has been redefined.

But Emmert has been viewed by some as not a catalyst for change but as an obstacle standing in the way — or at the least reactive

instead of proactive.

"Throughout my tenure I've emphasized the need to focus on the experience and priorities of student-athletes," Emmert said in a release from the NCAA. "I am extremely proud of the work of the association over the last 12 years and especially pleased with the hard work and dedication of the national office staff here in Indianapolis."

The announcement comes one year after the board approved a contract extension for Emmert that ran through 2025, a move that left many in college sports bewildered. Emmert's salary was nearly \$3 million in 2021.